

# Editorial

## The Function of Journals

The 1984 ABA convention was held in Nashville, Tennessee. I remember attending a very interesting symposium at the convention that concerned the purposes, policies, and future directions of four prominent journals. The speakers were the editors of those journals: Phil Himeline of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior*, Brian Iwata of the *Journal of Applied Analysis of Behavior*, the late Willard Day of *Behaviorism*, and Jim Johnston of *The Behavior Analyst*. The discussant was Don Baer.

As I recall, Don gave the speakers high marks for their eloquence, and justifiably so. However, he was a little disappointed that the editors did not speak more about the *function* of their journals. After all, he noted, as behavior analysts we try to adopt a functional, rather than a structural, perspective when we deal with the world. In particular, he asked what was the function of the journals represented by the speakers? For example, he teasingly asked whether their function was to publish articles that allow people to get jobs, promotions, grants, or pay raises? As many people recognize, getting jobs, promotions, grants, or pay raises, at least in academia, often emphasizes how many articles a candidate has published in high-quality, high-prestige refereed journals.

To be sure, the conventional considerations about which Don teased us are undoubtedly more relevant than we recognize. In an important sense, journals like *The Behavior Analyst* do exist to publish articles, and the articles people publish in them no doubt influence whether they receive job offers, promotions, grants, and pay raises. However, I think Don was prompting everyone to think beyond these conventional considerations. In particular, it seems to me that from a functional perspective, the importance of the articles is reflected in the

extent to which they function as discriminative stimuli for the subsequent behavior of those who read them.

Of course, as behavior analysts, we advocate a particular perspective on such things as the practices that modern psychology and modern society might usefully follow to make the world a better place in which to live. For our perspective to be influential in this regard, the articles we publish should presumably mediate reinforcers for those who read them. Those reinforcers range from effective action at a cultural level to discovering uniformities, finding order, and resolving puzzlements at a more individual level. In the larger sense, then, it seems to me that we can write all the articles we want about pigeons pecking keys on concurrent schedules or radical behaviorist philosophy (just to pick two topics not entirely at random), but if we cannot argue that those articles contribute somehow to advancing behavior analysis or to making our world a more worthwhile place for those who read the journal, we cannot hope to have much of an impact.

What then is the function of *The Behavior Analyst*? In short, it seems to me a major function is to serve as a repository for articles by the members of ABA that illustrate the breadth and depth of the contribution behavior analysis can make. Sometimes we are our own audience, but we should not lose track of our secondary goal: to reach our colleagues and constituents who are not yet behavior analysts.

With that function in mind, let me close by saying that I am pleased to be able to serve ABA, and I look forward to working with all of you.

J. Moore  
Editor